

# INTERPRETING MEDITATION AS AN INTERRELIGIOUS OCCASION: AN INTERRITUALITY APPROACH

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## Abstract

This research examines meditation as a form of interreligious engagement through an interrituality approach. The concept of interrituality involves interreligious encounters that are catalysed by rituals. The meditation considered here is a public meditation organised by one of the Buddhist institutions in Indonesia, namely Karangdjati vihara Yogyakarta. This research uses semi-structured interviews and participatory observation of regular non-Buddhist participants in the vihara. Drawing on the interrituality approach, this research aims to present the plurality of interpretations of the one Buddhist ritual of meditation based on the participants' immersions, and needs that allows for the sharing of religious experiences in a hospitality moment. In that way, this study aims to contribute to broadening the interest of interreligious studies from theological, theoretical, and discursive dialogue to the more practical, lived interreligious encounters through the realm of ritual.

**Keyword:** Buddhist ritual; Interreligious engagement; Interrituality; Public meditation

## Abstrak

Penelitian ini meneroka meditasi sebagai momen perjumpaan lintas agama melalui pendekatan interrituality. Konsep interrituality bermakna perjumpaan lintas agama yang diwujudkan oleh ritual. Meditasi yang diteliti adalah meditasi umum yang diselenggarakan salah satu institusi agama Buddha di Indonesia, yaitu vihara Karangdjati Yogyakarta. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode wawancara semi-struktur dan observasi partisipatif terhadap partisipan reguler non-Buddhist



di vihara. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan interritualitas, penelitian ini berupaya menampilkan pluralitas penafsiran atas satu ritual meditasi berdasarkan penghayatan dan kebutuhan para partisipannya yang memungkinkan terjadinya saling berbagi pengalaman religius dalam suasana ramah tamah. Dengan cara itu, penelitian ini hendak berkontribusi untuk memperluas perhatian studi lintas agama dari dialog teologis, teoritis dan diskursif ke perjumpaan lintas agama yang lebih praktis dan hidup melalui ranah ritual.

**Kata kunci:** Ritual agama Buddha; Hubungan antar agama; *Interrituality*; Meditasi Publik

## I. INTRODUCTION

This research examines meditation as a Buddhist ritual hosted by Karangdjati vihara (monastery) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The meditation is open to the public every Friday evening, while Puja Bakti rituals exclusive for Buddhists are held on Wednesday evenings. Both of them are weekly rituals. It is interesting to note that Karangdjati vihara is one of the very few viharas that organises meditation for people regardless of religious background. Popularly, Yogyakarta is well-known as the city of students (*kota pelajar*), making this city quite a metropolis and dense with hectic urban activities (although not as dense as Jakarta), both study and work activities. The fast pace of life and the hustle culture make people, especially those of youth in Yogyakarta feel the need to take a moment of respite from their daily lives to think of themselves and their daily affairs. Given the diverse religious backgrounds and cultural identities of the migrants, it makes sense that meditation would be their preferred activity besides the daily or weekly worship (Solat in Islam, or Sunday worship in Christian). The participants who came to do this public meditation were mostly migrants and non-Buddhists.

Although the activity of meditation is universal and, to some extent, exists in every religious tradition, for the sake of this study, this research deliberately takes it as a ritual rooted in Buddhism and Eastern spiritual traditions, mainly because of its technical insights and instructors. As such, meditation is a Buddhist ritual. This outlook might be debatable. However, the argument to be built from it is that the meaning of ritual itself is not singular but, based on the perspective of interrituality, is plural and diffractive (Barad, 2007). I would argue that the meaning of ritual lies nowhere but from the individual itself performing the ritual. Any essentialist definition of ritual would only limit the richness of

the experiences and interpretations of each participant, as every person has diverse experiences and interpretations. Hence, one ritual practice is open to and can encompass many interpretations and on a given occasion, like public meditation this article presents, can become a platform that brings together those various interpretations and experiences. The interrituality perspective illustrates how these encounters of interpretations and ritual experiences in public meditation open up new perspectives for understanding other forms of interreligious engagement through ritual.

Marianne Moyaert, in *Broadening the Scope of Interreligious Studies: Interrituality*, proposes an expansion of the study of interreligious dialogue from the dialogue that is merely theologically and textually oriented, to discussions in the realm of lived religion that discuss religion as a material expression of everyday life as it is observed in practises, symbols, and rituals. In this regard, she focuses this lived interreligious discussion on ritual studies. This ritual-ritual encounter in interreligious discussions is termed interrituality.

This discussion of interrituality then provides a new perspective in inter-religious and studies with more appreciation to the lived religion (see Hurd). Interrituality stems from the idea that ritual is not only limited to a particular religious practice that is closed from the involvement of other practices, both rituals and the daily lives of other people with other religions. As a theoretical framework, interrituality can have a broad meaning depending on what phenomena are encountered in the field. Thus, interrituality goes beyond the essentialist view of ritual. Furthermore, the perspective of interrituality gives new meaning to ritual, from exclusivist to inclusivist, from essentialist to performative, and from reflexive to diffractive points of view.

## **II. METHODS**

This research was conducted in May 2023. The methods used in this research are participant observation and interviews. The interview subjects were non-Buddhist participants in public meditation, whom we had previously asked for their consent to be interviewed. We conducted semi-structured interviews with five Muslims and one Catholic. After generating the results of the interviews, this research categorises them thematically in favour of interrituality analysis. The explanation we generated from the participants reveals that the Buddhist meditation ritual features a diverse, interpretative

dimension. This research displays the multiple interpretations of Buddhist meditation rituals.

### **III. DISCUSSION**

#### **A. From Theological to Lived Religion Dialogue**

Before applying interrulturality as a perspective in interreligious studies and seeing the importance of paying more attention to rituals in the study of religion, let us briefly look at an essential shift in interreligious studies. Initially, interreligious dialogue stems from the discourse on scriptural reasoning and interreligious hermeneutics. The conversation revolves around the belief in the ultimate reality, which is presupposed to be unified and shared by every religious tradition but manifested in diverse texts or scriptures in each religion. The point is to bridge textual differences in order to attain mutual understanding, or cross-understanding. In short, the discourse of interreligious dialogue usually focuses on theological dialogue, dominated by Christianity and Islam, where the questions are about revelation, God, salvation, and truth. Yet again, the purpose is to have understanding across religious traditions.

This model of interfaith dialogue is almost always limited to academics and intellectuals. It hardly touches on the dynamic encounter at the grassroots level with the multifaceted dimensions of religion itself, namely the material culture and ritual practices that are often multiple, fluid, and hybrid. As Moyaert said:

"...the focus on theological dialogues contributes to a problematic presentation of collective and individual religious identities as fixed, bounded, and exclusivist, thereby ignoring the fact that, at a grassroots level, identities are often multiple, fluid, and hybrid." (Moyaert, 2019).

Moyaert proposes that interreligious dialogue should pay close attention to sociopolitical issues and power relations, or, in other words, the context in which religious beliefs are practised. Moyaert seeks to broaden the scope of interreligious studies to redirect academic attention beyond dialogue-centred models of interfaith engagement to the field of interrulturality. Borrowing the categorisation developed by Elisabeth S. Hurd (2015) on the three facets of religion, namely governed religion, which refers to religion from the perspective of religious authorities; expert religion, which refers to religion as theorised by religious scholars; and lived religion, which refers to religion as it is lived

by its people, I would take interrituality as part of 'lived interreligion' in the sense of Hurd's later category.

### **B. Ritual and Interrituality**

In dominance religious studies, drawing on Durkheimian tradition, ritual is always defined merely as a set of religious symbolic practices that serve to unite religious believers in a shared sense of belonging (Durkheim, 1995). In other words, rituals may bond people together in communities. However, such a classic-essentialist and monolithic definition narrows the meaning of ritual itself. It ignores the diverse experience of the ritual performers as a part of performing the ritual. Turning away from such a definition, this research tries to take a closer look at the definition of ritual as it depends on the occasion and the performer. Then, following Cathrine Bell's idea, this research will look at the ritual as 'performance', which refers to not only the "*execution of a preexisting script for activity but also explicitly unscripted dimensions of an activity in process.*" (Bell, 1998). Through this lens, it can be understood that ritual has various dimensions, functions, and interpretations. From this turn, ritual can be portrayed as the lived religion aspect that is always dynamic, alive, supple, and open to constant flux.

Interrituality refers to the way(s) that interreligious encounters are concretized in the performance of embodied ritualised practices. To quote Grimes, interrituality "is the term ritual studies scholars use to describe rituals that transpire in the 'spaces' between traditions" (Grimes, 2017; Moyaert, 2019). Discussing ritual in interreligious dialogue brings out how ritual is a widespread and multifaceted phenomenon since interritual encounters do not only occur in sacred spaces such as mosques, temples, churches but also in secular or secular spaces, such as schools, and hospitals.

Interritual engagement may be consciously organised with friendly intentions (such as one community inviting members of another community to the celebration day) or with antagonistic intentions (like burning the scripture as a protest or religious blasphemy). Interritual encounters may be annual practices that continue for a long time (for example, fasting breaks that engage another religion's ritual participation, possibly resulting in a shared religious sense of belonging), or they may also have a political purpose of expressing a message of peace.

Hence, interrituality sheds light on how the encounter between people who believe and practise differently is concretized and materialised through symbols and symbolic practises; of how interreligious relations, friendly or hostile, are concretized and

materialised in the performance of embodied ritualised practises. Therefore, interrulturality in interreligious studies deals with the complexities of lived religion that manifest in interrultural engagement.

Ritual participants, or in our case, meditation participants, do not only do it passively according to the directions of the meditation instructor. Relying on the phenomenological idea that humans are hermeneutical beings that understand and interpret the world as –in Heideggerian terms- a way of being-in-the-world, meditation participants are also actively involved in shaping the meaning of rituals. Not only do they perform rituals, but they also interpret them and experience them differently. Moyaert further explained that, from his interpretation and understanding of the ritual, it also shapes how a person perceives and lives the ritual (Moyaert, 2019). Therefore, ritual has an interpretative dimension, which lies in the immediate understanding of the performer's experience. Thus, we can observe that the definition of ritual is dependent on the performer, and this interpretative aspect goes far beyond the definitions provided and bounded by the essential definition of ritual.

Accordingly, the various interpretations of one ritual serve this ritual as an interrultural platform that brings together various interpretations in one ritual moment. The meditation I and my team researched in this mini-project figured out this fascinating interrultural moment.

### **C. Mediation and Its Universality**

Meditation has become an increasingly popular Buddhist ritual among urban people. It can be said that meditation is an activity that is frequently practised by almost all people who are looking for 'something' in their break time from daily activity, especially urban people such as those in Yogyakarta. I would say that the rapid rush of life and the hustle culture have caused urban people to lose their subtle moments with themselves to observe their life. One of the activities preferred by urbanites to get out of their daily routine is meditation. Karangdjati Vihara seems to be well aware of these circumstances.

When I asked the instructors and officials of Karangdjati Vihara about the history of the Vihara in the middle of dinner after meditation, Mas Bram, the meditation instructor, told me that this Vihara used to be the venue (lodge) for the meetings and activities of the Theosophical Society organisation. The Theosophical Society was a transnational organisation in the colonial era known for its all-encompassing teachings,

accounting for religious, spiritual, and philosophical discussion. Theosophical Society promotes the teachings of eastern spirituality, especially Buddhism, in the Dutch East Indies.

The Theosophical Society was founded in Europe, specifically in New York, by Russian nationals Mme. H. Blavatsky and Colonel H.S. Olcott in 1875. The movement was not only engaged in the sphere of spiritualism but also in the social sphere, especially in response to the crisis of spiritualism in the modern age, marked by rampant industrialization and materialism. The vision was to bridge Eastern spiritualism with Western modernism. One of the main tensions of the organisation was to counter the Christian missionary movement in the colonial period that dominated the discourse of spirituality. The movement primarily opposed Christian proselytization and colonisation through its publications. The idea of Buddhism was first introduced by this organisation.

The Theosophical Society was known to be a universal organisation because of its movement that promotes universal spirituality, drawing mostly on Buddhism and eastern spirituality, and also because of its members, who consist of various people with various religious backgrounds and classes. There are three main visions of the Theosophical Society: “*first*, to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour; *second*, to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science; *third*, to investigate the unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.” (Yulianti, 2020).

Worthy of note that Theosophical Society also organises Buddhist classes and discussions as part of its mission to encourage people of all religions and backgrounds to join the society. For the sake of the main discussion, this article will not cast further light on the Theosophical Society's relationship with Buddhism in detail. Through this backstory, I would like to say that it is historically reasonable for the temple to open its activities, in this case meditation, to the public in terms of social engagement.

Meditation, or *Samadhi*, is one of the rituals in Buddhism. Meditation is aimed at mental training and self-awareness, which in turn help the mind become unified, concentrated, and calm, leading to the emergence of understanding and insight from a clear mind. Meditation aims to see things as they are, thus freeing oneself from ignorance and preoccupation with the elusiveness of reality, which is the ultimate goal of enlightenment and awareness. Meditation in Buddhism entails withdrawing from the daily engagement and flow of thoughts, taking a break, and giving time to contemplate

self-awareness. From this exercise, there will then emerge a deep calm, stillness, and a transformative awakening of consciousness (see Rubin, 2001).

In Buddhism, meditation is guided by a person who serves as a teacher, master, or instructor. The role of the teacher here is very important for the workings of meditation. Even at more advanced stages, meditation requires a personal teacher. Meditation requires a teacher because the teacher is the one who has trained and mastered the subtle skills that cannot be learned independently through written instructions. The teacher or meditation instructor will guide the person through the stages and difficulties of meditation. The teacher can identify a person's mental state during a certain meditative state and keep him in the proper mental state through his directions. For meditation, the 'right conditions' are the appropriate state of mind and of the specific technique being used (Harvey, 2013).

The main process of meditation is mindfulness. Mindfulness is the process of thinking about something with the intention of being mindful and not floating. In doing meditation, the person will focus on one thought, observing it seriously so as not to be distorted by other thoughts that may come. Mindfulness requires observing oneself with an intense mind that is calm and clear, not in a state of mind that is out of control and slumbering. The common result of meditation is a gradual increase in calmness and awareness. With meditation, a person is expected to become more patient and more self-controlled under the influence of the ups and downs of emotions and moods.

This article will not discuss the details of meditation practice, such as the methods, the stages of consciousness, and the types of meditation such as samatha and vipassana and their references in Buddhist scriptures such as the Satipatthana Sutta and Mahasatipatthana Sutta. It is quite enough to emphasise that, based on the simple explanation above, meditation is basically a ritual that is not exclusive to Buddhists alone. My point for the sake of this research is to assert that, to some degree, Buddhist meditation is universal, allowing it to be open and accessible to anyone.

The rituals of meditation in Buddhism are thus different from the rituals of worship in other religions, especially the Samawi religions such as Islam and Christianity, whose rituals are exclusively performed by their believers because the theological sense is more dominant than the practical means. It becomes clear, then, how the pinning of the term ritual to the practice of Buddhist meditation is somewhat problematic and distorted.



The experiences and interpretations of meditation participants that we generate will show that meditation is actually on the blurry line of the spectrum between religious ritual (Buddhism) and self-healing practices. Furthermore, based on our participants' experiences, I will highlight how meditation can be understood and interpreted in many different ways that transcend the essentialist way of defining ritual.

#### **D. Interviews and Discussion**

We conducted the interview after the meditation was over. The meditation lasted about half an hour. The temple provided dinner and time to catch up together after the meditation. After dinner, we started our conversations with the interviewees. The first interviewee was AP, a Muslim and lecturer at one of the universities in Yogyakarta who has been following meditation at Karangdjati vihara for a year. AP enthusiastically shared his existential journey of self-discovery. At first, he did not find an answer to the existential question of "who am I" in the teachings of his religion (Islam). He had sought various ways, until finally he came to this meditation programme in Karangdjati vihara.

“... since participating in this meditation programme at Karangdjati monastery, I have discovered the meaning of “I” which is relative and never fixed. The subtlest veil to find this awareness of ‘I’ is the ego and desires that are hidden within. Meditation makes it easier for me to be aware of my existence in mindfulness in daily activities.” (AP, 2023).

AP discovered that the meaning he had been chasing, "who I am," was always in a state of flux and never fixed, and he found this awareness in meditation. He realised that the barrier to achieving this realisation was the ego and its desires. He feels a moment of loss and detachment from his ego when doing meditation. AP also explained how meditation also helped him deeply understand the teachings of his religion.

“... since attending meditation here, I can understand what it means to be solemn when praying. ... I enjoy the Friday sermon [solat jumat] more because there I can practice mindfulness. And I also got a deeper understanding of things that I used to learn in my religion.” (AP, 2023).

Finally, when we asked him whether, in order to achieve these goals, he also participated in Puja Bakti rituals reserved for Buddhists and other religious rituals, On the basis of his religious beliefs, he said no. He only participates in meditation that is open to the public.

The next person is FZ, a traveler. FZ began with an interest in Buddhism and an invitation from a friend. She shared,

“There are a lot of results after participating in meditation; I feel calmer; I feel like I have a support system from meditation practice. It used to be easier to be sad; now my emotions are more manageable. Whatever happens, it's okay to happen.’.

“Before joining meditation, I was a person who was far different from my true colours because I had experienced an incident that hit me very hard. For 3 months I suffered and was tormented, and finally began to try to find answers with meditation at this Karangdjati vihara. And when I do it regularly, I can slowly understand myself and how to respond to things outside myself.” (FZ, 2023).

Her experience shows that meditation gives space for self-healing and self-control because, through meditation, she finds a support system and coping mechanism. His story impressed us because, thanks to this meditation, she is more able to accept everything that has happened with grace and sincerity. We don't go into her personal issues; it's enough for us to know that meditation is significant and means something to her.

PD, a Muslim student at one of the universities in Yogyakarta, has an experience similar to that of FZ. For her, meditation helps her achieve self-awareness and accept all the regrets that have happened in her life. He sees meditation more as a form of self-reflection therapy for mental and emotional health.

“Mediation helps to make oneself aware of not feeling arrogant, feeling regret for one's past bad behaviour, thus generating a sense of enthusiasm in the future life.” (PD, 2023).

However, his explanation suggests that he does not see meditation as a Buddhist ritual, even though the procession and stages follow the Buddhist tradition.

“Meditation is a ritual that is not religious, meaning that it can be done by all followers of other religions. I liken meditation to a place of therapy and reflection as a self-restraint management, as well as healing that does not need to be travelling far and expensive.” (PD, 2023).

The PD's interpretation of meditation is an example of the fact that not all rituals are religious or wholly religious in nature. Therefore, the interpretation of a ritual cannot be entirely based on an essentialist definition of religion. Given that every ritual also has an interpretative and performative dimension, the meaning of a ritual can diverge depending on how it is experienced by the performer. In other words, even though the ritual is one and performed together in the same way, the interpretation of it is diffractive. The meditation activity is one, but the experiences and interpretations are diverse.

Another compelling story about the experience and meaning of meditation comes from IP, a Muslim working as a legislative assistant. She is one of the very few people who has the ability to sense the future. It sounds like an advantage. However, she said,

people around her were worried about her and her ability, and she suggested having therapy to put her ability into good use. She also said that she once suffered from mental illness and stress.

“Initially, I did have a little ability to sense things that haven't happened yet (6th sense), so many people suggested cultivating it to be better and purposeful... I also used to have mental illness and stress.” (IP, 2023).

In her experience of meditation, just as PD and FZ felt, IP also benefited from it for her mental well-being and better self-control. For him, meditation exercises him to be able to perform his worship more intensely.

“...I can more easily exercise my breathing, be intimate with myself, and easily control my emotions, ego, and bad habits. Meditation also makes me more sensitive and can quickly anticipate things that happen by sensing something (usually given a vision or through dreams). I find it easier to overcome problems and find solutions. I am also more able to be solemn in prayer and worship in Islam, because the essence of meditation is the same as being solemn.” (IP, 2023).

Another utterly new experience and interpretation for us came from TA, a Catholic student at a university in Yogyakarta. Despite having more or less the same experience as IP, FZ, and PD, she further shared her understanding that meditation provides what is actually absent or unexplored in her religious rituals. She said,

“During meditation, we are taught to be more mindful of ourselves—our awareness. The instructor told us to pay attention to the movement and rhythm of the breath. This, for me, trains self-awareness. When I do meditation, I find a feeling of awareness that is more than usual.

Initially, I joined the puja bakti meditation, which is on Wednesdays and is for Buddhists only. It was also a series of site visit classes organised by the university. But it turns out that there are also those that are open to the public. The one for the public is on Friday. I have participated in this Friday four times.

I'm Catholic. Actually, the teaching of meditation is not absent in Catholicism. It does, and it's usually done before a service. However, meditation is not common in Catholicism. It's only done by certain people.

And the purpose of this meditation is to get closer to God. Well, it's different from the meditation at Karangjati vihara. Because the teachings of meditation are taken from Buddha (Buddhism), and in my opinion, Buddhism contains teachings to look within [self] and control the ego, so what I feel is that awareness, self-consciousness, which is what is lacking and different from Catholic mediation. Catholic meditation emphasises our awareness of the presence of Jesus. So, the method of meditation itself is different.

Only certain groups do meditation, although anyone can. It's not limited to just before worship. Each community has other creations regarding meditation in the Catholic Church.” (TA, 2023).

From TA's point of view, it can be understood that not all rituals in one religion fulfil the needs of its followers. There are things that are not yet available in the rituals of her religion, so she chooses rituals from other religious traditions to fill the gap. TA's explanation shows that meditation can also bring to life certain dimensions of consciousness that can enrich a person's religious experience of their religion, especially their religious rituals and worship. Therefore, activities outside of religious practices could become an option to fill this need, such as yoga, gym, meditation, and travelling. Urbanites use the term *healing* for these leisure activities. The universality of meditation provides spaces and moments that are not accommodated in other religious rituals, making it open and acceptable as an alternative ritual for everyone, regardless of their religion. That is why meditation has become an alternative ritual for urbanites to fulfil needs that cannot be met by their own religious ritual.

The last person we interviewed was NF, a Muslim and university student. NF's story further confirms this research's statement that the meaning of rituals is not only diverse but can be very wide. He told us how he had tried to do meditation but was unable to achieve the intended mental state. He tried hard to control his thoughts and breathing, but the meditation instructor seemed to be running too quickly, so he could not follow through the steps properly. More or less, he didn't get much out of the meditation other than a sense of exhaustion. Instead, he found something else in this meditation activity at Karangdjati Vihara.

“At first, I came to the meditation because I had a site assignment to visit Karangdjati vihara. Then from there I got information that there is meditation that is also intended for the public, not only for Buddhists. At first I wanted to try it out and gain experience, and I also wanted to know exactly what Buddhist meditation is. At first I thought meditation was just a matter of managing your breathing, closing your eyes, and concentrating. But after trying it once, I was interested and continued to participate. It turns out that meditation is not just that.

Although directed by the instructor, there was actually nothing special I felt when meditating. It was just the same as I used to do on my own at the boarding house. In fact, I was tired. But other people who were there said they could be more relaxed and calm; for me it was just like normal, or maybe not yet, because yes, I'm still figuring it out.

Although directed by the instructor, there was actually nothing special I felt when meditating. It was just the same as I used to do on my own at the boarding house. In fact, I was tired. But other people who were there said they could be more relaxed and calm; for me it was just like average meditation. Why I'm interested in participating is because it's not just meditation that we do. The meditation is

still important, yes, to exercise the mind and heart. But, after meditation, we have other activities that I find useful. Like meeting and having dinner with other participants. Even though we're not close friends, it feels like we've been friends for a long time; it feels more comfortable to share experiences about our own anxieties. And just sharing stories, you know, I think can be very valuable. The instructors also sometimes join in to listen and give advice. That's what I find useful in Karangdjati meditation. The meditation is nothing special.” (NF, 2023).

There were a series of moments after the meditation process was over that were also significant and shaped NF's experience and interpretation of this ritual. NF shared her experience of social engagement after the mediation. For him, meditation is important, but there are more important things for him, namely dining and gathering together with other participants. Meditation practises at Karangdjati Vihara are not limited to its mediation process. After finishing the meditation, the instructor will give a little advice and give participants time to share their experiences. The instructor also provides feedback and advice for participants who have difficulty doing meditation. After the talk is over, participants are welcome to enjoy the meal provided by the vihara. After eating, the instructor is still in place and open for consultation or any concerns of participants. Needless to say, this meditation programme is not solely concerned with the meditation process itself; rather, there is a social engagement moment going on afterwards. NF sees that it is precisely this moment of sharing stories about common concerns that makes meditation a kind of meaningful ritual for him.

However, NF's attitude is clear when he points out that, although there is a social dimension to the rituals of other religions that is worthwhile and helpful to follow, he will only engage in the rituals of other religions if they are open to the public regardless of religious background. It is thus clear that, according to NF, rituals have their own exclusive dimensions and limitations that are reserved only for its adherents.

“As a student of religious studies, I think it's okay to participate in other religions' rituals, to try to understand and feel the inner experience and psychology of their followers when performing their rituals. Although of course it is not possible. But as a Muslim myself, I have a religious attitude that I have carried since I was a child, one of which is to distance myself from the rituals of other religions. If there is no reason, such as for study purposes or friendship, I will not participate. For me, this is also a form of respecting the rituals of other religions.” (NF, 2023).

Drawing on the results we generated from the above meditation participants (AP, FZ, PD, IP, TA, and NF), we then categorised their experiences and interpretations into 4 categories; spiritual, intellectual, psychological, and social. The spiritual category is based on the experiences and interpretations of meditation articulated by AP and IP. For

AP and IP, meditation had an impact on increasing their spiritual awareness when performing their religious rituals. The intellectual category is based on the experiences and interpretations of AP, who also explored the meaning of "who I am" through meditative reasoning. The psychological category draws on the experiences and interpretations of PD and FZ, who see meditation as a means for mental therapy, emotion management, healing, calming anxious souls, self-acceptance, and exercise in understanding one's moods and how to respond to things beyond one's control. Lastly, the social category is derived from NF's statement about his social engagement experience in sharing and listening to experiences and concerns that they have in common with other participants after meditation sessions end.

Drawing on the plural experiences and variety of interpretations of the participants, this research shows that a singular-essentialist approach is inadequate for capturing meditation as interreligious engagement. Therefore, the performative turn, to borrow Burke (2005), is necessary in illuminating the performative dimension of rituals and seeing how it matters in interreligious occasions. These four categories are representative enough to show that although meditation is performed together on one occasion, there is in fact not only one ritual going on in this meditation but many rituals occurring at once.

Arguably, different interpretations of one ritual can already be understood as the plurality of each of those rituals. In this case, we can conclude that this one practice of meditation is not singular but rather actually plural, allowing for multiple rituals happening at the same place and time, and showing the diffractivity of rituals. Therefore, following and furthering Moyaert's interrulturality approach, given that one ritual (meditation) is always plural in experiences, interrulturality also has to accommodate the plurality of each ritual, and thus, interrulturality itself is always plural.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This research displays the multiple interpretations of Buddhist meditation rituals. The meditation that we observed is the one held at Karangdjati vihara, Yogyakarta. It is a meditation that is open to the public, regardless of religious backgrounds. This paper has shown that, although meditation is a ritual based on Buddhist tradition, its immersion and interpretation are not singular. This research draws on the idea that the meaning of ritual is not only limited to the practical aspects of religious activities but also includes the

participant's interpretation of their immersion in performing the ritual. In our case, the participants of meditation are not only Buddhists but also those from other religions who come with their respective interests. With our results in the table, I want to highlight that the ritual experience of each meditation participant opens up possibilities for diverse interpretations of the ritual. This open meditation creates space for the encounter of these various meanings, experiences, and immersions in one religious occasion and reveals interrituality.

Shifting our understanding of religion by appreciating the centrality and importance of the performative sphere of ritual practices will also lead to a more advanced understanding of interreligious relations. This research applies Moyaert's interrituality approach to shed light on meditation in Karangdjati vihara and finds that not only is ritual plural, but the interrituality approach to inter-religious engagement is also plural. By shifting attention from theology to lived religion, we seek to reshape the essentialist understanding of ritual from a perspective of interrituality. Therefore, this alternative understanding of interrituality offers a new perspective to examine other forms of ritual and interreligious engagement through interrituality.

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